

**SAN LUIS VALLEY REGIONAL HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday April 14, 2014
1:30 P.M.
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION CONFERENCE ROOM
Alamosa, CO 81101**

Present: Pat Steenburg, City of Alamosa; Doug Clark, RiGHT; Mike Blenden, USFWS; Charlotte Bobiki, Senator Bennett Rep.; Brenda Felmlee, Rep. Scott Tipton's Aide; Greg Spangler, City of Monte Vista; Paul Tigan, BLM; Allison Schaak, DWR; Matthew Valdez, Costilla County; Marty Asplin, Town of Del Norte; Terry Ireland, USFWS; Jenny Nehring, Wetland Dynamics; Cary Aloia, Wetland Dynamics; Stephanie Ferrero, CPW; Jerry Freeman, SLVEC; Erin Minks, Senator Udall Rep.; Rose Vanderpool, Rio Grande County; Wendi Maez, Saguache County; Linda DeHerrera, Conejos County;

RGWCD: Sandra Montoya, RGWCD; Chris Ivers, RGWCD; Bill Mangle, ERO; Peter Ampe, Hill and Robbins.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Pat Steenburg welcomed all those present and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Steenburg asked for discussion on the agenda. Mr. Blenden moved to approve the agenda and Mr. Clark seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Steenburg asked for a motion to approve the November 4th, 2013 meeting minutes. Jerry Freeman moved to approve the minutes and Mr. Blenden seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Steenburg asked for public comment. Sandra Montoya commented on behalf of Ms. Dutton that she would be doing a restoration project on the McDonald ditch that would be covered under the HCP.

USFWS REPORT

Mr. Steenburg asked for a report from the USFWS. Mr. Ireland was on the phone and reported on the following:

The proposed rule for listing the yellow-billed cuckoo was released and the second public comment period will go through April 25th, 2014. The proposed critical habitat ruling is not out yet but is expected in May or June.

Sandra Montoya asked about who could conduct certification for monitoring. Mr. Ireland explained that he should know in the next day or so.

Mr. Blenden inquired where the lead office for the yellow-billed cuckoo was. Mr. Ireland said it was the Sacramento office.

Stephanie Ferrero asked whether pipelines would be covered under the HCP. Mr. Ireland thought that as long as there was no federal nexus they should be.

ANNUAL REPORT

Bill Mangle explained that he tried to craft meaningful information so that it can be replicated on an annual basis and asked for comments on what should and should not be included. Bill Mangle explained the need for excess mitigation credit and the potential, over time, to transition from acquiring mitigation credits to a stewardship role.

Mr. Freeman asked about breeding surveys on mitigation parcels to show that the HCP is helping in recovery of the SWFL and possible ways to accomplish breeding surveys. Bill Mangle responded that that is not the purpose of the HCP, but would be a “value added project” entirely at the discretion of the landowner.

Mr. Freeman suggested conducting outreach in publications and Colorado Field Institute. Other suggestions were the Crane Festival, soil conservation districts; Rotary, Kiwanis, and Elks clubs, Wildlife Society, Potato Conference, and Society of Wetland Scientists. Also, it was suggested by Erin Minks that outreaching to other areas, i.e. Gunnison, to explain the HCP and how it works could be beneficial.

UPDATE ON MITIGATION

Sandra Montoya explained that two easements have been secured accounting for 299 acres and that two more easements were in progress. Mr. Freeman asked why these two easements were chosen. Sandra Montoya explained that they were suggested to her and had willing landowners. Ms. Aloia asked if SWFLs had been detected. Sandra Montoya replied that they had detected SWFL on one easement.

Ms. Aloia asked about criteria for qualifying as mitigation credit. Sandra Montoya explained some of the general criteria as per the habitat quality index and suitability forms. Bill Mangle explained that there is a certain bar that must be met for habitat quality and also for management practices before inclusion as mitigation credit. Discussion about what is suitable habitat followed.

Sandra Montoya used google earth to show general locations of the easements.

Ms. Nehring asked about the number of surveys to determine presence/absence and how often surveys would be conducted. Sandra Montoya explained that a simple callback survey was conducted during habitat monitoring once every three years. Mr. Clark asked if presence/absence met the requirements of the HCP. Sandra Montoya and Bill Mangle explained that the main purpose is to provide habitat similar in quality to areas that are known to support SWFLs.

Ms. Nehring brought up acoustic monitoring with remote detectors. Lengthy discussion followed about what it could provide for species detection. Mr. Spangler asked who would pay for this type of monitoring and pointed out that there is no financial backing for the steering committee.

MONITORING

BLM

Paul Tigan explained that this year is the BLM’s off year for monitoring. However, due to the fire last year it is likely that some monitoring will occur to see how the habitat and SWFLs respond, possibly the full protocol.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Ms. Ferrero stated that monitoring will occur every three years on the Rio Grande and Higel State Wildlife Areas and has been contracted out to Wetland Dynamics.

Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge

Mr. Blenden stated that the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge will be doing monitoring this year as well.

Field Trip

Sandra Montoya shared that a field trip to easement #4 will be held on June 12th, 2014, meeting time and place to be determined.

Mr. Freeman asked about a biologist field trip. Sandra Montoya explained that the purpose of the biologist field trip was to explore the different types of high quality habitat in the HCP covered areas.

OTHER

Committee Member Reports

Mr. Steenburg asked for any committee member reports. Sandra Montoya explained that this was the time to report any permanent impacts, questions, or concerns. There were no committee member reports.

Mr. Blendon informed the committee that this was his last meeting.

SCHEDULE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday November 17th, 2014 at 1:30 pm.